

PA13-251

SB0896

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

**VETO
SESSION**

**VOL.56
PART 31
10451 - 10795**

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have voted the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. Clerk, please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

In concurrence with the Senate, Senate Bill 903
amended by Senate A.

(SB906)

Total Number Voting	144
Necessary for Adoption	73
Those voting aye	144
Those voting nay	0
Absent and not voting	6

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes in concurrence with the Senate. Will the Clerk please call Calendar 635.

THE CLERK:

On page 27, Calendar 635, favorable report of the joint standing Committee on Human Services, substitute Senate Bill 896, AN ACT CONCERNING A HOMELESS PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49th):

I move the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate. Will you remark, Madam?

REP. JOHNSON (49th):

This bill creates a homeless bill of rights and homeless person's bill of rights so that all the rights are available in one place and the person will be able to know what to expect. I move adoption.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Madam, do you need to call the amendment?

REP. JOHNSON (49th):

And I would now call -- move adoption in concurrence with the Senate and call LCO 7616 which is an amendment and be granted leave to summarize.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 7616 which has been previously designated Senate Amendment A.

THE CLERK:

Senate A, 6 -- 7616 as introduced by
Representative Johnson, Senator Gerratana and Senator

Welch.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The Gentlewoman seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize.

REP. JOHNSON (49th):

This is a simple amendment that clarifies and makes in conformance the definition of home -- and conform homeless person in conformance with the federal law and also limits the requirement from shall to may in terms of posting the Bill of Rights. I move adoption.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is adoption of Senate Amendment A. Will you remark? Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I rise in strong support of this -- this amendment as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Sir. Do you care to remark further on Senate Amendment A? Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I was just looking quickly at the amendment and I see the title 42 is

cited as one of the changes in terms of the definition of homeless. I'm just wondering if the good Chairman knows what that actual definition is because in the underlying there was some vagaries there I wasn't sure how this applies. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. The -- I don't have the exact definition before me. Is -- I did so that we'll be able to locate the answer quickly and completely. Thank you, Mr. Chairman -- Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank the Chairman.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Sir. Would you care to remark further on Senate Amendment A? If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor of Senate Amendment A please signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Those opposed, nay. The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted. Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended? If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.
The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the Chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have voted -- if all the members have voted the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

In concurrence with the Senate as substitute Senate Bill 893 -- excuse me, 896, Senate A.

Total Number Voting	143
Necessary for Adoption	72
Those voting aye	109
Those voting nay	34

Absent and not voting 7

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes in concurrence with the Senate. Will the Clerk please call Calendar 615.

THE CLERK:

Calendar number 615 on page 25, favorable report of the joint standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding, substitute Senate Bill 1131, AN ACT CONCERNING CHANGES TO THE CONNECTICUT HISTORIC HOME TAX CREDIT.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Perone.

REP. PERONE (137th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move for acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill. Will you remark, Sir?

REP. PERONE (137th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under the current law the homeowners and nonprofit owners that rehabilitate historic homes qualify for a business tax

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Total Number Voting	35
Those voting Yea	32
Those voting Nay	3
Absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The bill as amended passes. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 41, Calendar 281, substitute for Senate Bill Number 896, AN ACT CONCERNING A HOMELESS PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS.
Favorable Report of the Committee on Public Health.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana. Good evening.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Good evening, Mr. President. Mr. President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

On acceptance of passage for remark.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, Mr. President, thank you so much. This bill establishes a bill of rights for our state's homeless people. They are residents in our state. And I want to assure everyone that this is a bill that bestows no new rights. Everything is subject to our current laws in our state statutes, municipalities as well as on the federal level. But it comes to us through a request for those people who provide services for the homeless and from the homeless themselves. It is patterned after similar bills of rights that we have in our statutes, including the Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

Mr. President, the Clerk has an amendment. If he would call LCO Number 7616 and I'd be allowed to summarize.

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Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 7616 Senate "A" offered by Senators Gerratana, Welch, and Representative Johnson.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Mr. President. I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

On adoption, will you remark?

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, I will, thank you, Mr. President. This amendment makes some changes to the underlying bill and the reason being as the bill has gone through a variety of committees, I listened carefully to what members of the Legislature commented about the underlying bill. And one of the comments came from a number of members of the Legislature, who said for consistency purposes we need to define, as we do in other parts of the statute, a homeless person as it is described under federal code. So we did that here.

And we also took away any hint of a fiscal note in line 26 by striking "shall conspicuously," and inserted the word "may" for the posting of this bill of rights in municipalities. This came from Representative Rosa Rebimbas on the Judiciary Committee. I hope the members will approve of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. I thank Senator Gerratana for bringing this amendment forward. And it just shows to the

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extent that she follows these bills, and she takes the inputs of members of the public seriously. This amendment is good in that it gets rid of any ambiguity that might exist having multiple definitions of homeless, that is one via state and one via the federal government. We now have -- we will now have one with respect this bill. And I think as Senator Gerratana said, there was some murmurings that this bill might be an unfunded mandate. I question that in that we're merely asking that towns and cities to post a piece of paper. But nonetheless, the requirement to do so with this amendment will now be gone, and so therefore it will not be. So with that, I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the bill? Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Thank you. Will you remark further on the amendment, Senator? If not, I'll try your minds. All those in favor please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Those opposed nay. Ayes have it. Senate "A" is adopted. Remark further on the bill as amended. Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you I have a couple of questions to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. Just looking -- and I do remember this bill in the Public Health Committee, Senator Gerratana, but if you could just refresh my memory a bit. The -- just looking at the overall report, it says, you

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know, "Under the bill of rights, each homeless person has the right to move freely in public spaces, have equal employment opportunities, receive emergency medical care, register to vote, have their personal information protected. Receive equal treatment by state and municipal agencies." Don't we do that already? Doesn't everyone get that right? I mean, you know, isn't that something that is law currently? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Mr. President, yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

THE CHAIR:

Did I say Madam? I apologize. Mr. President. I'm so used to saying the other. So you said yes. So why are we doing this? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President. As I mentioned with the testimony of those who provide services for the homeless as well as the homeless, they provided the testimony and requested that we do this. We did this for, as I said in my introduction, for the citizens of our state who are taxpayers. The drafting attorney said it is drafted according to how we drafted the bill of rights for taxpayers. It's very similar.

So I think the law here that we are making and the reason for the bill is that we are congregating into one space in our statute that yes, indeed, these people who walk among us who are, indeed, residents of our state have these

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rights just like everyone else. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. You say walk among us as if they are different from us, they are foreign from us. They are us. A homeless person is the same as any other person in this building with the same unalienable rights. So when you -- you know, I still don't understand the concept when you say the advocates came to testify and say we need this, that assumes that there is a problem where homeless individuals are not allowed to move freely in public spaces, do not have equal employment opportunities, do not receive emergency medical care. Do not or are not registering to vote and on and on and on. But my first question to you was don't we have these rights already, and you said yes. So where's the issue or where's the problem occurring that the advocates needed this creation when we've already said that this is a right for all of us. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President. I think because in the title of the bill it says A Homeless Person's Bill of Rights, there is perceived sometimes in our society that homelessness or a person who is homeless is different from the rest of us. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. Is the -- the homeless individual is different from the rest of us how? Through you.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President. I said perceived to be in some way. And if you read the testimony that was given on the Public Health Committee, as I said by those who are providers and those who are homeless, they did delineate for us some of the ways they are treated differently. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. And treated differently by whom? Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President. I would have to pull up some of the testimony, but in talking with some of the homeless people as well as the providers, they have brought the issue to us, to us here in the General Assembly and to our Public Health Committee, and these are areas where they may have -- may have been treated differently. And so they're asking that we state -- and it's a positive statement and a proactive statement that they too have rights in our society. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. Well two things, by whom was the question, and secondly, they have the rights already.

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These rights are in the constitution that we all have. Every single human being, we are, you know, equal. All of us are equal. All men are created equal. So again, by whom are they not giving their rights or not being allowed their rights to the items that are listed in this bill or any other item for that matter. Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President, I think if you look at the bill and the bill of rights, to move freely in public spaces such as parks, buildings, sidewalk, and public transportation in the same manner as other people and without harassment or intimidation by law enforcement officers, that is one area that it's been reported. And I think it was the testimony, actually, that there may be either obstruction or in some way that they are treated differently. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. So there's testimony that the law enforcement officials are harassing homeless people? Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President, that's not what I said. That's not my intention, but I would have to go through the testimony. The other reason, by the way, Senator Kane, is that, and if I misspoke, then I apologize for that, but I do have here, there is a standard of law that is being enacted, from what I understand, around the country. And again it's a positive and proactive statement.

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And I want to read to you that regardless of what may be either perceived or may have even happened that the advocates, the homeless, as well as those who provide for the homeless, basically have been talking about in every state and they want to know that many Connecticut residents continue to face the specter of homelessness due to the severe shortage of affordable housing, the impacts of economic hardship and economic down turn in our state, as well as the shrinking social safety net. And they are, with this proposal, proactively stating that we have to remind people that the very state of homelessness sometimes causes people in our society to react and make assumptions that because you're homeless, perhaps you're not equal or the same as you and I are here, Senator Kane. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. And shame on those people who make those assumptions that a homeless person or any other person is not equal to you or I or any other person in this building or throughout the State of Connecticut. But that's an assumption made by an individual. That is not something that is being perpetrated, if you will, by any state agency, any federal agency, any -- any organization. You know, so for example, if we didn't pass this bill today. Let's just say the majority leader stood up and said we're going to pass this bill temporarily, and unfortunately we don't do the bill. Would a homeless person be able to move freely in public space without this bill? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President. As I said in my opening statement that this bill that we have before us as amended actually does, indeed, guarantee all the rights that currently under state law, federal law, and municipal law and the U.S. Constitution. Through you, Mr. President.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Okay, but I guess what I'm saying is these rights that we talk about are already in existence. Every single individual in the State of Connecticut has these very same rights. Whether you own a home, you rent a home, or you're homeless. Regardless of race, origin, religion, whatever you want to term you want to use, we all have these rights. So I guess I'm still trying to understand the necessity for this legislation. I mean, is it just, you know, feel good legislation?

Why don't we do things for the homeless. Why don't we put more money into the budget for homeless shelters? Why don't we have more job creation? Why don't we have job programs? Why don't we do things that are actually going to help individuals rise up from the problems that they have and become productive members of society where we can all -- succeed. You know? That's, I guess, this is what I'm getting at.

You know, and what I'm trying to understand is how we propose legislation that, you know, quite honestly, I don't know if it's really doing anyone any bit of good, you know? Are we, you know, because all these things, these six rights, if you will, under this Homeless Person's Bill of Rights, are already in existence. Every single person in the State of Connecticut has the ability to move freely in public spaces, whether it be parks, buildings, sidewalks -- sidewalks, public transportation. Same as other people without harassment or intimidation by law enforcement. That right there makes an assumption that law enforcement is harassing these individuals. Right -- right there, that's saying that law enforcement harasses homeless people versus everyone else. That I don't -- I don't fathom.

Equal employment opportunities. That's in law. That's already there. Everyone has equal opportunity. Equal employment. Receive emergency medical care. I mean, we all have that, right? If god forbid one of us falls down the stairs today, we're going to get medical treatment.

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Register to vote, we all have that as citizens of the United States, we all have the ability to register to vote and vote.

I just, I'm trying to understand why we are proposing this type of legislation. I mean, it -- it -- I know the amendment that we took care of earlier on, a few minutes ago took away the mandate from municipalities on posting this type of bill of rights or this information. But what are we doing to educate people on homelessness? What are we doing to help homeless individuals find a place to stay, to find shelter. To find work, to find job training. That's what we should be talking about.

Let's get together, get together with the Appropriations Committee and find money to help these individuals. Let's, you know, get them to be a productive part of society rather than the opposite. And I think what this bill does, you know, simply, I think it just makes us feel good that we created a bill of rights when, in fact, this is something that each and every person has the right already. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Mr. President. If I may for the purposes of legislative intent, just ask a few questions to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR WELCH:

I apologize for the delay in pulling it up.

As -- as I understand the bill as I read it and then also the discussion that we've heard so far, this bill is not intending to create any additional rights for the homeless. And for instance, the discussion that Senator Gerratana and Senator Kane just had essentially acknowledges that the homeless have the right to freely

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move about public spaces just like a non-homeless person will. And it's not an additional right. So we're not reading into that that they can get on public transportation for free. In fact, they have to pay just like anybody else would have to pay.

And as I move down to line 19 I see that we are saying that they have the right to equal opportunities for employment. And I think that's probably where my question comes in for the purposes of legislative intent. And that is as I understand this bill and perhaps Senator Gerratana can confirm this or not. We're not making the homelessness a protected class. We're not giving them a right that a non-homeless person would have to employment. We're just acknowledging that employment is for them as well as. And if Senator Gerratana can confirm that or deny that, I would appreciate it. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Mr. President, yes, I will confirm that.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Gerratana. And that is one of the reasons why I have supported this bill as it moved through committee. I understand that Senator Kane has some very real concerns, that there are issues here that we need to address, and there are issues we need to address, especially with an economy that has been struggling for years. More and more people have been homeless. With ever increasing veteran population, with people returning home from wars with mental distress, with post-traumatic stress syndrome, with various other challenges. They often find themselves on the street. And as we as a society struggle how to help these people, what this bill does is it helps us have that as top of the mind awareness. And although this bill isn't going to solve our problems, this bill isn't going to make the issue

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go away. It, at least, is keeping it in the forefront, reminding us that this is something we need to continue to deal with even well beyond what we're doing here today. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I think that the bill has a purpose of demonstrating that nobody should be treated in a harmful or disrespectful manner just because they don't have certain means.

And I think the intent of this bill is to bring to light and remind people, I suppose, of that very basic individual and important right. But I would ask the proponent of the bill for legislative intent to be clear on a couple of issues that, at least I want to make sure I understand the bill does not tread on. So through you, Mr. President, if I may to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you. On lines 15 through 18, if I may, Senator Gerratana, it says, "move freely in public spaces, including on public sidewalks, in public parks," and it goes on. "In public buildings without harassment or intimidation." Well, I recognize that a homeless person's right is to move freely as any other member of the public. If a hypothetical was a homeless person is panhandling inside a public building, whether it be a town hall, a Wendy's, Subway, in a public building, panhandling asking for money, would this bill prohibit the owner or caretaker of that facility from asking the homeless person not to do that activity? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

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SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Actually Senator Fasano, I was asked that question as it moved through the committee process, and I answered in this way. That again, any local laws, state laws, or federal laws, and of course according to our constitution are still in place. So with your hypothetical I would answer in this way. That if panhandling is illegal or not allowable in that municipality, then the person would be subject to the laws of that municipality and all other laws. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Gerratana, I appreciate that answer, and I thank you for that. And I think it was important to bring that out in the Circle for legislative intent, that it is to allow homeless people to go about their business, and do what they -- what anybody else can do, but not to give them a right to exercise panhandling or should the issue arise where they're disturbing the public, that that would not -- this bill would not allow that to be a shield against the enforcement of those rights.

The other question I would have is in line 26 through 29, "each municipality shall conspicuously post in the usual location for a municipal ordinance, municipal notices, a notice entitled Homeless Person's Bill of Rights that contains the text set forth in B," which is above.

And I guess the first question I have is, are there any other postings that you are aware of that our laws require to be posted with respect to either patient bill of rights or elderly bill of rights. Are those normally posted in town halls? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

THE CHAIR:

Through you, Mr. President. Senator Fasano, we did adopt an amendment that says now, line 26 reads, "each municipality may post in the usual location." My understanding is, Senator Fasano, that in some cases notices are posted, notices of employment opportunities, legal notices. And I have seen in our own city hall, there's posted boards -- boards where you can post messages regarding the town council meetings. And sometimes even that there's -- in many places I have seen on these boards that there would be help for, for instance, battered women. I have seen those places. So towns and municipalities in our state do post notices and other information that may be of interest to their residents. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Gerratana, I thank you for that correction. You're indeed right. I had read the amendment, and I did forget that bottom portion of the amendment that made that change, and I thank you. And I also wanted to state that I also want to thank the Senator for working with others who come up with ideas to make maybe some enhancement to bills and ideas that may not be thought about. I know you've always been one in the Circle to open up and listen to the folks who come up with ideas. And many times appreciate those by incorporating those bills -- those ideas into the bills, and I want to thank you for that. And I thank you for the answers to my questions. So thank you very much, Senator.

Mr. President, homelessness is a -- a huge problem throughout this country and our state. And as was said earlier, this problem is more apparent as our economy deteriorates. And without a doubt, every human being on this planet deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. And to have a Homeless Bill of Rights, if not for anything else, to remind us that we need to uphold that dignity for these individuals is important.

There was a homeless guy who, when I first started practicing law, was outside of my law firm. And I was a

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solo at the time. And he slept in the alleyway. And I would see him in the morning, buy him a sandwich, Dunkin' Donuts every now and then. And I finally sat down and talk to him. And he actually became homeless because he was set to be married. And the day before the wedding, his fiancé skipped out on him. He went drinking, and he was an accountant by trade. He actually worked in a major accounting office. And that one issue alone sent him off for five or six years. Some of us got together, and we helped to get him back going, and then he moved out of state with family.

But the point is you never know when it's going to strike, and it can strike all walks of life based upon certain things and the certain exits that life brings about to people. So with that, I think this is an important bill to get out there. I think it's important to understand that those rights exist, and we all should count our blessings that we have what we have. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Markley.

SENATOR MARKLEY:

Thank you, Mr. President. I agree with the comments that have been made about the extent of this problem, which is one that a member of the Human Service Committee I confront. And I think all of us confront both in our districts and among people we know, that relatives I have had that have struggled with such problems and have gotten themselves for one reason or another in such a sad position.

And I think our instinct to want to extend sympathy through recognition and a sense of worth to people is a natural and a commendable one. That said, I feel as Senator Kane said, that I fear that we do things like this to make a gesture. And I think either the gesture is if it's not -- if it has no particular consequences, it's not adequate. And if it does have consequences, they may not be the ones that we have in mind when we -- when we pass it. And this would be my concern about a piece of legislation like this. Especially one that is termed with such a significant title, a bill of rights. The kind of

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title that I think almost should be reserved for the Bill of Rights that we have in mind when we use the term.

And when I see a line that starts out by saying each homeless person in this state has the right to, I think that everything that follows clearly ought to apply to every single person in this state, not to homeless people exclusively, but to all of us. And I don't -- it goes against -- it goes against the grain for me to single out people like this either for a right or for the denial of a right.

And I worry that beyond Senator Kane's objection that what we may be doing does not actually have a significant effect, I worry, in fact, that if it does have an effect, it may not be the effect that we want it to have.

We have a provision in our State Constitution that very simply says that every child is entitled to an education. And the courts have used that provision for better or for worse, to initiate a very wide-ranging and long-lasting intrusion, to my mind, into the function of the education system of this state, which is beyond the control of the Legislature.

And by being beyond the control of the Legislature or the Executive Branch, outside of the direct influence of the people themselves who are supposed to be in control of this government.

I am always wary of giving the courts an excuse to do such a thing. And I fear that a bill like this might do so. And for that reason, with sympathy for the need for to us treat all people with respect as human beings, as citizens, which all of us who live here are and which I think from the foundation of this country was considered to be the highest office that could be granted. That beyond that, the rights that are extended to citizens, there are no further rights to be had. And I think that that should be the -- the touchstone of our acknowledgement of the rights that we have as citizens of the State of Connecticut. For that reason I will oppose this bill with thanks for the work that has gone onto it. Obviously the bipartisan work that has gone into it, and the good sentiments that were behind it. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

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Thank you, Senator. Will you remark on the bill as amended. Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I actually agree with everything Senator Markley said. I'm going to choose to support the bill, though, and want to explain why.

First, I think Senator Gerratana has made it very clear in her remarks and in answers to questions by members that, for the record and the legislative intent, is clear that this confers no additional rights on any person or someone who is homeless beyond the rights that they already have guaranteed under their state and federal Constitutions. And no court can read anything else into that.

I do agree that using terms Bill of Rights seems to be something that we should only use when we talk about the Constitution and perhaps this should be a small b and a small r instead of capital B, capital R. But I want to share why I think it's okay to support it. Even though it appears to only announce the rights of people, the rights that they always have.

As some may know, that back in 1986 my dad, with others, spent a night outside of Washington, D.C. in the middle of winter with a number of people to highlight the plight of people who were homeless. And when he was asked why he did that, he remarked that as a member of Congress he could walk some five or six or seven blocks, I forget what it was, from his apartment in Washington to the Capitol, our nation's Capitol, and on the way literally trip overs dozens of people who were homeless, literally sleeping next to grates in the middle of the -- you know, on the side of the street because heat would come up from the subway. And in the wintertime, that's where people who were homeless would want to be so they could actually get the heat from the subway.

And the idea that he brought attention to what he thought was a problem in our country was why he did it. I think this bill brings attention to the fact that we have people who are homeless. And what's frightening about the number of homeless we have is how many of them are veterans. How many veterans we have in this country who come back after

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serving their country and are homeless, whether they're living on park benches or abandoned buildings or even worse.

Every year for the last several years, Operation Hope, which is a homeless shelter in my hometown, where I had served on the board, participates in something called a Point in Time Count. And they go out in Bridgeport and in surrounding towns for an entire night and they go around with teams of people walking streets looking for people who are homeless, trying to meet with them, see if they'll answer questions about why they're homeless, how long they've been homeless. They can put a survey together to identify the size of the problem, the source of the problem, and to try to find solutions to the problem. I've done that. I've done that in the City of Bridgeport. I've run into people, some who have been homeless for years. And others who have been homeless for days or weeks because they've lost their job. The number of women and children and families who end up in our shelters who don't have a place to live is frightening as well.

And so I guess what I regret, and I think what we all regret, is that we are doing something that feels good. We are doing something that may bring attention to a terrible problem. But we're not addressing the root cause in solving the problem. And that's what we need to be doing. That's what we really need to be doing.

A Homeless Person Bill of Rights that states the rights that they already have as citizens of this state and this country isn't what they need. They need a roof over their head. They need a job. And so I think it's important to just announce again, and anytime we can, and highlight the fact that there are too many of our neighbors and our brothers and our sisters and our veterans who are living in places that are unimaginable, whether it's on a street corner or an abandoned building. And I would -- I would encourage my colleagues, to the extent when it comes around in the wintertime, they do it in Hartford and they do it in Waterbury, and they do it in places like New Britain and some of the larger cities, to go and volunteer in the Point in Time Count. And walk communities of our larger urban areas. And they don't limit it to just the urban areas. They also participate in Fairfield and Trumbull and other towns as well, Stratford and the like, to see firsthand the people who are out there and what they go

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through.

Because I think when you see that and you understand it, it can help you try to figure out how to foster a solution to what is a horrible problem and something that we should all be ashamed of in our society that we have people who have no place to call home. Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you, Madam President, as well.

(The President in the Chair.)

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Good evening, Madam President. Yes, I will. I wanted to read to you some of the testimony, because I know that some of the members here in the Chamber have commented, and -- and everyone, I think, is very supportive, even those who feel that perhaps the law before us may not be to their liking or appropriate. But I do want to read the testimony of one of the individuals who came before the Public Health Committee. I don't usually do this, but I think it's very poignant and gets to the point.

We who are lucky enough to live in our own homes and apartments can lock our doors, turn on an alarm system, and go to sleep knowing that we and our possessions are safe. We have a place to go to get out of the rain and the snow and the heat of the sun. For our homeless sisters and brother, this is not the case. During the day when the shelters are closed to them, they have no place else to go but into libraries and parks and on benches. They need and deserve the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Their rights to use and enjoy public spaces must be reinforced, because they are too often violated. Just because someone does not have a permanent home does not mean that they deserve to be harassed or criminalized or treated with any less care than any other citizen.

The burden of homelessness is great enough. Cruelty and violence against those who are homeless must stop. Thank you, Madam President.

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THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not, Mr. Clerk will you call for a roll call vote and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Senators please return to the Chamber. Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

There is an immediate roll call vote in the Senate.
Immediate roll call is in progress in the Senate.
Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

All members voted, all members voted. The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On Senate Bill 896

Total Voting	33
Those voting Yea	30
Those voting Nay	3
Absent and not voting	3

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if the Clerk would call next the item from Calendar page 15, Calendar 466, House Bill 5602.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Calendar page 15, Calendar Number 466, House Bill Number

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**JUDICIARY
PART 6
1718 - 2061**

2013

Testimony Regarding Raised Bill No. 6572

Respectfully Submitted by Rabbi Donna Berman, Executive Director, Charter Oak Cultural Center

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

I moved from to Connecticut from New York 15 years ago and, frankly, have never felt more proud to live in this state than I do now as two bills protecting the rights and liberties of people who are experiencing homelessness are before the legislature: H.B. No. 6572, An Act Concerning Intimidation Based On Bigotry Or Bias Against a Homeless Person. and S.B. No. 896, An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights, which will be heard later this week.

This is a glorious and noble moment for Connecticut. Both of these actions will benefit all the residents of our state, making Connecticut a more just and humane place and, at the same time, thrusting us on the national stage as we set an example for how to care for the most vulnerable among us that, hopefully, the rest of the country will follow.

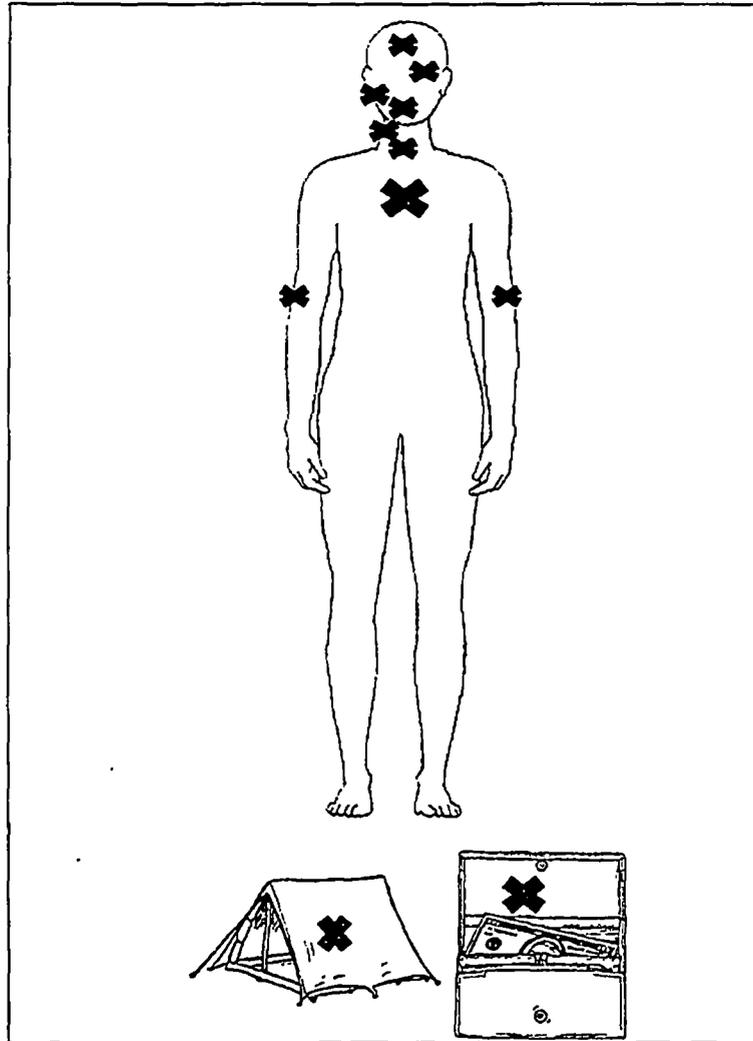
The bill before you today, which proposes "To include within the offense of intimidation based on bigotry or bias the act of a person intimidating or harassing another person because of the actual or perceived homelessness of such other person," is essential. We who are lucky enough to live in our own homes and apartments, can lock our doors, turn on an alarm system and go to sleep feeling secure. We enjoy the safety of a consistent four walls around us. Those without homes lack these fundamental things. Both the elements and the hostility we all fear are a constant risk for them.

There are always people, who for their own psychological reasons, act out their wounds by preying on those in the minority, on those who are considered "different." These acts of violence are based on hatred of a group, i.e. they are based on bigotry. Violence against people who are homeless is an expression of bigotry, of hatred for the poor and downtrodden. It must be treated as the act of hate it is. Hate crimes are a blight on our society. People experiencing homelessness are doubly impacted because they have little or no resources for warding off, gaining protection and healing from such attacks.

I, therefore, urge you to pass H.B. No. 6572 so that our homeless brothers and sisters, already so at risk, will have added protection and the knowledge that their well-being and their lives matter to their fellow citizens.

Thank you.

Support of HB 6572 & SB 896: Violence Against the Homeless



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA—March 11, 2011

John Rutledge, a tile-worker who had been laid off the previous year, was on his way to a homeless shelter when he was assaulted by four men. He sustained multiple injuries during the attack, including a fractured jaw and severe lacerations to his lips and mouth. The perpetrators also stole \$60 from him.

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA—March 30, 2011

On March 30th, Tommy Leadbetter, 46, held a 26-year-old homeless woman captive in his house for many hours. During this time, he beat and tortured her. The police found the young woman walking through a neighborhood with lacerations and bruising on her head, chest, and arms. She was then treated at a local hospital. Ledbetter was arrested about a week later and was charged with torture, assault, and robbery.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—April 22

Four young people severely beat a homeless man, 50, after attempting to rob him. The man was pistol-whipped and stabbed in the cheek by two of the men, one of whom was between the ages of 25 to 30. Then, another man and a woman set his tent on fire.

DAVENPORT, IOWA—July 31, 2011

Melvin Gott, 57, was sleeping on a park bench when he was attacked by Frankie L. Sird, 27. Sird put a knife to Gott's throat and demanded money. When Gott tried to pull the knife away, he was punched by another assailant who had approached from behind. Sird proceeded to kick Gott in the face with steel-toed boots. The attackers ran off when an ambulance arrived in response to a witness's 911 call. The victim needed stitches for the slashes on his neck, and the beating left him blind in one eye.

Submitted by the Institute of Violence Prevention & Reduction (IVPR) at the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work
Reference: National Coalition for the Homeless (December 2012). Hate Crimes against the Homeless: *The Brutality of Violence Unveiled*

**JOINT
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COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**PUBLIC
HEALTH
PART 8
2384-2726**

2013

SENATOR GERRATANA: Could you please just state your name for the record.

NEIL BERRY: My name is Neil Berry. I'm the Vice-President and Assistant Director of the Homar Sheree Thornton Foundation, an organization that works to fight racism and discrimination.

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I'm here today to support the Bill of Rights for Homelessness, for homeless people. I've done some studying. I've noticed that there are already a number of bill of rights. Bill of rights for people with disabilities. Certain shelters have a number of bill of rights for people living in their shelters, a number of treaties that we already have in the state.

The problem is that a number of these rights are not legally binding. They're not enforced, nor are they enforceable. They're vague and a lot of people do lack interest.

We do believe that in order for people to be protected from oppression, that's why we need you the courts so that people can be protected by the rule of law where people don't necessarily act in good faith and brotherhood toward one another. Then we need those rights so that people will adhere to certain rules pertaining to individuals.

We believe that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment. We believe that everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, food, clothing, shelter, medical care et cetera. We believe that everyone as member of society has a right to social security and is entitled to the realization through a national effort and in accordance with the organizations of resources of each state of

the economic and social cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and for the free development of his personality.

We believe that everyone has the right to environmental security, personal community security and political security.

An example is in police work. Police work, unlike most other professional activities has the capacity to bring officers into contact with acute cross section of society with well recognized potential for producing negative stereotypes of particular groups.

Such stereotypes become the common occurrence of the police occupational culture. Failure to address them is liable to result in a generalized tendency, particularly where any element of discretion is involved, whereby minorities may receive different and less favorable treatment than the majority.

Such differential treatment need be neither conscious nor intentional and it may be practiced routinely by officers whose professionalism is exemplary in all other areas.

We do assert that there must be an unequivocal acceptance that the problem actually exists and as a prerequisite to addressing it successfully, the notion that perception of a fact makes it a fact is illegal and philosophical monstrosity, to making unwitting bigotry a legal offense the only evidence relative to a judgment about whether an admitted word or act constitute an offense would be the assertion by the plaintiff that an offense had been committed.

However, every accusation must be investigated in a timely manner and justice must be served.

I won't go into the definition of bigotry or racism because we already know what that is.

Finally, we believe that the courts do have the power to protect civil rights and political rights and human rights. Some would say that these rights are non-justifiable, meaning that their provision or the breach of them can't be judged in a court of law.

Others would say that they're immediate, meaning that they can be immediately provided if the state should do so.

And finally, in summing up, I would say that it's obvious that one of the main problems of enforcing civil rights is the lack of interest.

So the words of Ralph Emerson, I do implore you. Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, Mr. Berry and thank you for your testimony today. Representative Sayers.

REP. SAYERS: Thank you. I'm looking at the bill and the information that's in here and a lot of the things that you're looking for, such as the right to vote and job opportunities, one of the roadblocks I see in trying to accomplish that is the fact that if someone is homeless, they don't have an address.

And one of things when you're registering to vote that they look for is that type of information that you're, for instance, if you're registering in a town that you live in that town where you're trying to register and vote.

How would we get around that? That's a roadblock and I'm not sure.

NEIL BERRY: We are, concerning roadblocks, we already have laws that protect people of specific populations, such as laws that protect people with disabilities, laws that protect people who

are over 65 or women, people of lesbian and gay community. Specific populations need to be protected against discrimination.

Because of the economy the homeless population has exploded, and that population is a vulnerable population that really doesn't have the ability to protect itself.

Therefore, we believe that it should be a law not to discriminate against people because they are homeless, and if you see that on the application, not to stereotype that person and to come to the conclusion that we don't want to employ that person.

Homelessness not only affects people with disabilities or people who don't have an education. It affects professional people, many people like I heard here today testifying, who because of certain circumstances or conditions beyond their control by no fault of their own will become homeless and suddenly they fall into a category where they're stereotyped and treated as second-class citizens.

REP. SAYERS: Yeah, and I'm not disputing that and I'm not disagreeing with you. I'm just asking for some help in how do you get around like for voting rights, that address part of it? Do you have some suggestions or some ways that that could be done, because I see that as a bit of a problem.

NEIL BERRY: Again, there, if I might answer. There are numerous organizations such as Affirmative Action, NAACP, Center for Human Rights and Development that advocate for people to make sure that they have voting rights. Homelessness doesn't put you in jail in a category where you lose your rights. The thing is, that even with all of these organizations, the main problem is enforcing these rights, to be able to allow a

person to vote, somebody who's in a shelter and the shelter doesn't allow them to go out and vote because they have to be in at a particular time.

That's infringing on somebody's rights because of their particular situation. A lot of the bill of rights that we're asking for are already out there. It just needs to be, we're asking that they would be specific to the homeless population so that the people who are homeless, because of their situation again, will be able to practice their God-given rights, their rights to do the things that all people, human beings, have the right to do.

The answers to those questions, again, a lot of them are already out there. It's just a matter of having them enforced.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there other questions? If not, thank you very much.

NEIL BERRY: And thank you very much for hearing me.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Aldine Burton, and then we'll follow that by Mike Leates, I think, Leer? Leir maybe? Leiz. Hello.

ALDINE BURTON: Hi.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Hi. Please state your name for the record.

ALDINE BURTON: I'm Aldine Burton, formerly homeless and I live in New Britain by way of Hartford. (Inaudible).

I know there's very little that I can say in three minutes to depict the plight of the homeless so I'm not even going to try. I'm just going to tell you what I have here and then I'm going to write you a letter explaining all these other wonderful things.

SB896

There will be some people speaking later who will say a lot of things that I would, but why reiterate what they're going to say a little bit later.

Now let me tell you about my attitude. I do not wish the taste of pig, from either gut or a grunt or bowel or jowl. I want caviar and shrimp soufflé, sherry, champagne, and not because these are (inaudible) but because I'm entitled.

I've been VdD enough, TBd enough, (inaudible) not need enough, (inaudible) bloodhound treat enough, but I want it high on the hog.

I've been hired last and fired first enough. I sugar-watered my thirst enough. Been (inaudible) slaved enough, cried enough, died enough, been deprived and survived enough, but I want it high on the hog.

Take away the black eyed peas and the grits, the high blood pressure chops and gravy sauce. I want (inaudible) supreme, baked Alaska, something suave and cool.

Where I've been considered (inaudible) from 40 acres and a mule, but I've been slighted enough, civil righted enough, and up tighted enough, and I want high on the hog.

But dragging the cotton sack on bended knees and burning sun and (inaudible) to the great king cotton but (inaudible) the money green tobacco for pocket change, for warming an iron (inaudible) for eating the leavings of others tables, I've lived my wretched life between domestic rats and foreign wars, according to my final rest in second-hand cars.

But I've been leased enough, (inaudible) color bleached enough and I want high on the hog.

Oh, I hear the mamas screaming or (inaudible) pain. I hear the things they're going against the grain, but I lived in shacks long enough, had strong black beaten (inaudible) long enough been urban brand and (inaudible) enough, been (inaudible) enough and I want high on the hog.

Now there was a time in America when we had work houses and bread lines. Now we have homeless shelters and soup kitchens. The time has changed but the stigma remains the same. No honest, decent, respectable person would be caught dead in either of them right now.

Looking from the ivory tower, the local VIPs bring billions of dollars worth of good cause to help the poor, but they have no clue what the practical needs of the homeless are.

President Obama, I'll summarize, President Obama told Mitt Romney that we no longer need horses and covered wagons. Not we have stealth bombers and submarines. This is 2013 and the Oliver Twist treatment, that is no longer in vogue. As a matter of fact, it's become passé.

The care giving system has evolved into a homeless industrial complex of (inaudible) on the misfortunes of others. Being homeless is not a crime. I'm an American citizen and I'm entitled and should have secure rights of equal protection under the law.

We live in a \$17 trillion dollar time, not billion, not million, \$17 trillion economy (inaudible) dictators around the world --

SENATOR GERRATANA: Mr. Burton. Mr. Burton.

ALDINE BURTON: Yes.

SENATOR GERRATANA: I'm sorry, could you summarize for us please?

ALDINE BURTON: I'll do it very shortly, thank you.
We prop up dictators all around the world and spend billions of dollars to feed people who hate our guts and the highest percentage of our homeless are veterans who put their lives on the line so we could sit here and laugh and talk and do all these wonderful things today.

We need a bill of rights for the homeless to ensure that all Americans are on a level playing field.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you so much. Do you like the bill?

ALDINE BURTON: Yeah, I think you could say so. I think you could say.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony.

ALDINE BURTON: Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: I guess no one has any questions.

ALDINE BURTON: (Inaudible).

SENATOR GERRATANA: Absolutely. Thank you. Quite entertaining. We're going back to our EMS system and the next person to testify is Mike Leats, I guess it is. Mike. Here he is.

MIKE LOUISE: Mike Louise.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh. I can't read it. It's the handwriting.

MIKE LOUISE: That's okay.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Letters missing. Welcome, sir.

MIKE LOUISE: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Mike Louise. I'm the Director of Operations

HB6518

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**PUBLIC
HEALTH
PART 9
2727-3065**

2013

Good evening.

MARILYN WATSON: Good evening to everyone. I wished we could have started at 6:00 a.m. And I know there's a lot -- I know there is a lot to be said. It's very important. It's not funny and it's serious.

I'm talking about everything else that was heard, and Number 896, the Bill of Rights for the Homeless, which has had -- should have been taken care of.

I believe that it is because of the caring non-support and just not important enough, but it is.

I know I used to be homeless, and I worked two jobs. And I kept saying to the Lord, Am I going to make it? I cannot afford to live. But things have been turned around and I want things to be turned around for the homeless. For the homeless that want to do something for themselves and to support other homeless and other bills because they are important. They may not be important to you, but they are important to me and to the homeless. I pray every day, every night, God, you have to do something. (Inaudible.)

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, thank you for that. We do appreciate it, and hopefully we will.

MARILYN WATSON: Most welcome.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, ma'am. Have a good evening.

Next is Amanda Girardin. Okay.

Harry Mitchell?

Chord Smith? Chad -- I'm sorry. Looks like C-h-o-r-d. Good.

CHORD SMITH: Good evening.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Good evening.

CHORD SMITH: I'm Chord Smith. I reside here in Hartford. I'm also here on the homeless bill. I'm going to try to make this briefly as possible. I've worked 10 hours today just to get here. I'll be brief. I was raised here in Harford. I went to the local schools here, graduated from Asnuntuck Community College, been active in the community for over 20 years.

Unfortunately, last year I was stricken with a physical ailment where I was separated from my job and deterioration of my marriage and a few other calamities that caused me to reside in a homeless shelter presently today. I'm actively enrolled in college online school at the University of Phoenix. I am gainful employed today, and I'm free of the medical condition that I was in. But, unfortunately, due to the economy and my marriage, I was forced to try to save up some money temporarily into a homeless shelter. Granted, keep it that I was -- worked in this field for a long time, and I thought that all of this was going to be an easy transition for me going there for a couple of months and saving up some money to -- to get my own apartment.

Unfortunately, the horror and the hell that I've experienced for the last month, was unbearable. And I'm certainly here to plead to anybody, you don't have to go live there, it is real, it is here. I don't have the face. I don't look like I should be -- I look like I should be able to walk and eat and sleep at my own leisure but, unfortunately, the horror that goes on there, shortly, the medical condition or -- you have

over 100 men in this place and there's only two functional urinals and two functional commodes and one or two functional sinks. It is horrible. The treatment of the staff there, the physical intimidation, mental intimidation -- just tonight I was almost about to lose my bed because I'm here.

I am shaking. I'm trembling because I want to be a part of this -- this great United States. And Connecticut has to do something about this homeless. The abuse that's going on. It's not -- it's not only just going on in the nursing homes. It's going on all over. And something has to be done. I'm like the lady. I pray every night that I'm able for this to be my last night. And hopefully, in two weeks, I will -- it will be my last time and if I could do anything, I could just say one thing. Please do something because I don't -- I'm not the face of it. I don't belong there, and I certainly don't have to endure the treatment. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, also, for giving your testimony. Now, have you, you know, usually people will contact us legislators to help out, sometimes there's supportive housing or subsidized housing that's available. Is there -- does the homeless shelter -- I know ours in New Britain -- helps individuals, if possible, get housing. There's no help for you or --

CHORD SMITH: No, I'm not saying there's no help, but the (inaudible) line is so long, I mean. It's just going to take years for me to even get into some of these programs, because I don't fit the criteria, you know, so there's different criterias. Something just has to be -- it has to be some kind of investigation because, technically, right now I'm in a no-freeze situation. I mean, April 1st, I have to leave so, you know, I am working on, you know, I thank

God for Nathan and Hands on of Hartford, because I -- we are working but it, you know, it just doesn't happen overnight, you know, so.

Unfortunately, Immaculate, where I presently reside, it's the only housing program that, you know, that could help you. All the other ones are short stays, like Open Hearth, just to support two-day short day, so they don't have the time to do it. The Firehouse or McKinney, are very -- they just warehousing people there, so there is a time, you know. Whatever's going on, whatever, you know, I get it. There's not enough money or whatever it is, but I'm one of the guys that's on the cuff, you know, and I don't want to have be -- go backwards.

I could be salvageable. There's no need for me not to have a roof over my head, and I work ten hours a day at a retail store, you know, just to make ends meet and due with my financial situation and, you know, my deterioration of my marriage, I find it very hard just to save money and to get my own place. But I'm enduring it, and I know that you guys will do something about it.

I just -- I just didn't believe that I would ever be here, and I'm here. I'm telling you there are many people there that work every day, and they just can't find it, whatever -- for whatever reason. It's amazing. More than half of the people that live there, they work. I'm seeing young 18-year-old kids, I'm seeing families. I don't know. It's -- something has to be done.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, I know Representative Srinivasan has a question for you -- a couple of questions. I'm going to turn it over to him, but also if you'd like to leave your name and contact information, we can, you know, see what we can do.

CHORD SMITH: Sure, if I don't hurry up, I might have to sleep here. What time is it?

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh, we all might have to sleep here.

CHORD SMITH: Oh, yeah, you got a question now. Sure.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, I'll turn it over to Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your testimony, and I hope your prayers are answered soon and we definitely will do the best that we can here.

Just one question for you which I didn't understand, you talked about -- and I understood the urinal part, the toilet part and all that limited kind of physical things that you have at the shelter, but you talked about intimidation and that was the part I couldn't understand. The staff there is intimidating, is that what you were referring to?

CHORD SMITH: Yeah. Upon me entering, I have to be frisked, wand down, all my belongings have to be gone through. And if you show any kind of intelligence, you know, anything that would, you know, knock the system, you are asked to leave immediately -- for what reason, where is I'm going? If you don't like it here, you can leave. Well, obviously, I need to be here. I just didn't wake up yesterday, say, Oh, I think I'm going to go to the shelter and live here forever. No, it doesn't work like that. And so knowing that every minute you could be thrown out, I mean, you know, it's intimidating. It's biased - - what, you know, 80 beds. Who gets to stay? And who don't go?

Unfortunately, I keep myself a little tidy. I'm a little tidy person and, you know, I'm a target. And I'm talking to people, and they don't like that. You know, you're just status quo, go sit down in the corner, or we're going to have you leave. Well, what have I done? I'm just trying to rally up the troops. I thought, you know, when I worked in the field, I thought it was like caring, people caring, you know, people lending out a hand.

You got staff people walking around with gloves on and flashlights. I'm very intimidated if I'm sleeping and you flashing a light in my face. I mean, you've got some guys who rather sleep outside or rather be in jail than to go through that kind of sleep. And that -- that is ludicrous. Who wants to go -- who wants to live in jail? Who wants to sleep under a bridge? But the physical -- not so much the physical, but the mental abuse and what goes on in there and, you know, I'm afraid right now of speaking out because of retaliation. I -- if it wasn't for Nate to call them tonight about -- I worked 10 hours today and I come from work straight here.

You have to be in at a certain time, if not, you lose your bed. So I'm in jeopardy of losing my bed just for sitting right here. So I -- someone has to stand up. You know, there's shame and deprivation -- who -- I don't want my face plastered as -- as the poster boy. I have a job to retain. I have family members, but enough is enough and I'm willing to go through that to show you -- what is the face of homeless? You know, do I look like I should be homeless? If I walked past you, would you think that I live in a homeless shelter? I reside there in bed 73 right now. So --

REP. SRINIVASAN: This culture that you're talking about, is it just -- is it prevalent, or is it just happens to be you are in a, you know, you're in a wrong set of people there and who are running the show that happen to have this culture, which obviously is not acceptable, or is it just a persistent consisting thing in these shelters?

CHORD SMITH: Well, I don't want -- I don't want to say it's prevalent because I don't want to be experienced enough to go around all shelters and say it's prevalent. I think this will be my last -- it's prevalent to where I'm at now. All you would have to do is just change your coat, take off your glasses and go live there for a night and you'll see, you know.

I tried to get Nate to implant somebody there just -- it's just the health problem, just having 100 people with two bathrooms, that alone. You know, I sleep with a garbage -- with a paper bag over me, with a garbage bag, so I don't want to catch anything. I don't want to catch nothing that I didn't go in there with. And I have to endure that every night. I've been there for a month. I have to endure that every night, and I pray every night that this is my last night. But to be intimidated to -- by if I speak up, I'm going, you know, I'm going to be put out, or if I come in a little late from work, I'm going to be put out. You know, just that fear factor. It's cold outside.

You know, some might say, well, what about family members, there's a lot of dynamics that go into one being homeless. It's just not what we think or what we read or what we see. It all -- an 18-year-old kid, and I'm speaking to, sleeping next to me, he has to get up and take all his clothes and get on the bus and go to school. I get it. People are really trying to do the best they can.

It's not drug addicts and derelicts and mental retarded people who are homeless. Law abiding citizen people are homeless today, and it shouldn't be. For whatever reason, it shouldn't be. Let alone being intimidated, let alone being asked to leave or threatened to leave. What if somebody come up to you, and says, Hey, if you don't behave yourself, I'm going to ask you to leave your house? It almost fits that -- it almost fits that. So I'm angry. I'm appalled and something just has to be done.

The intimidation factor, even sensitivity training, something, retrain these people. I would -- I come from there. I worked in the field for over 10 years so I felt that people would be sensitive to this. You got people walking around thinking they're bigger, really they're police. You got a badge or whistle? What is really going on here? So I simply say that if you can get someone to go in there for a night, they certainly, I mean, there's more than one -- there's more people that -- that want to come out and talk but the intimidation factor is, you know.

REP. SRIVIVASAN: Thank you for your testimony. I appreciate that.

CHORD SMITH: Thank you

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Yes, and thank you, Representative Srinivasan.

Actually, you know, I -- I know it's not going to help you right now, and hopefully we can, but I know the Governor has put some money in -- in the budget for a program that is called Rapid Rehousing.

CHORD SMITH: Yeah, I was aware of that today. I'm working on that.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Yeah, which is -- which is very good.

CHORD SMITH: But I'm, kind of, like caught in the middle because I don't qualify for some stuff, and I don't qualify this -- I'm -- my spirits are up. I'm quite sure you people will find some answer to this solution. But my main concern right now is the health issues that going on in the state, you know, a hundred men to two bathrooms. You got people sleeping on floors. You got people sleeping in hallways, you got people sleep then in area -- there's no education. There's no books. There's nothing. It's just warehousing people.

SENATOR GERRATANA: It's a bed, it's a bed.

All right. Well. Thank you for that.

CHORD SMITH: Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: And thank you for sharing also your story because I think it's important for us to all know and hear that.

Does anyone else have any questions?

If not, please stay safe.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Nate Fox.

NATE FOX: Good evening. For the record, my name is Nate Fox. Thank you, Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and the Public Health

Committee for raising this bill, especially, Senator Gerratana for taking this up.

As I said my name is Nate Fox. I am the project supervisor for Faces of Homelessness Connecticut and the Connecticut Homeless Human Rights Campaign. In addition to this bill, we're also working on a hate crime bill in Judiciary that would add homelessness as a protected category.

I'm here basically just in support of individuals, like Chord and Marilyn. Coming from, you know, what I've seen working in the homeless community for the past three and half years. I think the Representative's question about the prevalence of the treatment is a good one, and I won't say that it happens everywhere, but I've heard of it happening multiple times, you know, somewhat systematically.

And I think that really it's -- it's indicative of what this bill is about, which is that there is this systematic discrimination or bias towards people who are homeless. Whether or not we're conscious of it, I think it's out there, and I think that the fact that it then translates to the way in which shelter services are directed.

I think that it's not just happening in the shelters, you know, the shelters are a reflection of society and how we view people who are experiencing homelessness so that's why this Homeless Bill of Rights is so important. It's following up on legislation that was passed in Rhode Island recently where they instituted the first Homeless Bill of Rights in the country for a lot of the reasons that Chord mapped out, but also reasons around public safety, public concern, people, you know, accessing space, people filling out a job application and being afraid to put down the shelter address, people being afraid to go and get medical services

because they feel like the medical staff may look at them and say, oh, you know, you don't have insurance, you know, we're going to treat you differently. That's what this is about. We need to create a legal protection for people who are un-housed.

In Rhode Island, they amended their Fair Housing laws to include housing status as a protected category and that provided a legal framework under which one can now bring a lawsuit if they feel like their rights have been violated or if they have been discriminated against.

Questions of that use of public space coming here today, as someone who, you know, has a safe place to sleep at night, I can access this place even if it's midnight, fairly freely, but as Chord says, he risks his bed and there's no protection in our public accommodations language.

People are protected by their gender identification, their race, their ethnicity to be able to access spaces generally accessed by the public without freedom -- with freedom from discrimination. But for someone who's homeless that does not hold true coming here tonight, and so we really need a law that will institutionalize that protection and make sure that that systematic bias is stopped.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, thank you, Nate. And I thank you for your testimony and coming here. I know you've been here all day also waiting to testify. We do appreciate that.

Is there anyone who has a question or comment?
No?

Oh, Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Nate, for your testimony. Thank you for your advocacy. Thank you for all that you do for these people. We appreciate that very much.

Is there a place, you know, since you know all the various locations in our state, is there a place that these people can go to to -- I'm not sure if the right choice of word is "complain" or in this intimidation which happens, you know, in one location, and as you said may be more prevalent, is there a recourse for them already? Or they -- have they really have nothing that they can do unfortunately?

NATE FOX: Unfortunately, there isn't really an outlet for that. And that's something that I learned through doing this work. Connecticut does a great job at advocating for affordable housing. As the Senator mentioned, you know, Governor Malloy has had a very deep commitment to affordable and supportive housing. But in terms of the human rights issues, we don't have an organization that, sort of, is steadfast in upholding those.

Something I've been sort of trying to put together, because it's, you know, it's not here, so there's an opportunity to -- to take up that - - that action but, sadly, no, there is not one place to go. And -- and, therefore, like Chord said, there's that fear without that -- the numbers to be able to approach and say, hey, there's ten of us; one person isn't going to take that step forward because they don't know where to go. If a complaint is made, there's no follow up on it. There is no institutional representative that's going to take someone, like Chord's word, and follow up on it. And so this Bill of Rights would begin to create that process in that framework.

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pat/cd/gbr PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 15, 2013
10:30 a.m.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you and thank you for all that you do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you.

NATE FOX: Thank you. Have a good night.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Good night. You, too.

Next is John -- it might be Titus. Okay.

Next is Karen Swanson followed by David Jargrosse.

Is Karen here?

David?

Go to Leah Ferrucci. Not here.

Lauren Hurd. Hi, Lauren.

LAUREN HURD: Hello. Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee, hello, and thank you for having us.

SB 872

My name is Lauren Hurd. I'm from Hamden, Connecticut. I testified in 2011 and 2012, and I tell my story again this year in order to fervently reinforce the need for a complete ban on tanning beds for people under 18.

Tanning is big business. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, almost 30 million people in the U.S. tan every year, 2.3 million being teenagers. I was part of that statistic until four years ago when I was diagnosed with the deadliest form of skin cancer,

Testimony Regarding S.B. 896: An Act Concerning A Homeless Person's Bill Of Rights

Respectfully Submitted by Rabbi Donna Berman, Executive Director, Charter Oak Cultural Center

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee – thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I moved from to Connecticut from New York 15 years ago and, frankly, have never felt more proud to live in this state than I do now as two bills protecting the rights and liberties of people who are experiencing homelessness are before the legislature: H.B. No. 672, An Act Concerning Intimidation Based On Bigotry Or Bias Against a Homeless Person. and the piece of legislation you are considering, S.B. No. 896, An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights.

This is a glorious and noble moment for Connecticut. Both of these actions will benefit all the residents of our state, making Connecticut a more just and humane place and, at the same time, thrusting us on the national stage as we set an example for how to care for the most vulnerable among us that, hopefully, the rest of the country will follow.

We who are lucky enough to live in our own homes and apartments, can lock our doors, turn on an alarm system and go to sleep knowing that we and our possessions are safe. We have a place to go to get out of the rain and snow and the heat of the sun.

For our homeless sisters and brothers, this is not the case. During the day, when the shelters are closed to them, they have no place else to be but in libraries, in parks, on benches. They need and deserve the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Their rights to use and enjoy public spaces must be reinforced, because they are too often violated.

Just because someone does not have a permanent home does not mean that they deserve to be harassed or criminalized or treated with any less care than any other citizen. Just because someone does not have a permanent home does not mean that they have any less right to privacy and protection.

The burden of homelessness is great enough. Cruelty and violence against those who are homeless must stop.

While we very much appreciate your consideration of this bill, we urge you to pass a amended version (see attached) that adds more specificity and, therefore, more protection for those who are homeless. Patterned after the Rhode Island Homeless Persons' Bill of Rights, the amended bill, created by a group of people experiencing homelessness and their allies, contains greater protections than the proposed Connecticut bill.

Our homeless sisters and brothers are daily mistreated and maligned. This must stop. This piece of legislation would go a long way to bringing these abuses to an end.

This is an important moment in Connecticut's history. I hope you will have the courage to do what is right and to protect the rights and liberties of all our citizens, including some of the most vulnerable among us, those who are experiencing homelessness.

Thank you.

**ADDITIONS AND MAJOR POINTS TO THE
RAISED BILL NO. 896
CONNECTICUT HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS**

(1) At the present time, many Connecticut residents continue to face the specter of homelessness due to the severe shortage of affordable housing, the impacts of economic hardship and economic downturn in our state, and a shrinking social safety net.

(2) Article 1, Section 1 of the Connecticut State Constitution states in part, that "All [people] when they form a social compact, are equal in rights."

(3) In line with this essential statement of the common law, it is reaffirmed that no person should have these rights compromised, face unequal treatment, or suffer unnecessarily due to discrimination based on his or her housing status. This chapter intends to address and prevent the continuation of these negative impacts to Connecticut residents who lack a permanent home.

Each homeless person in this state has the right to:

- 1. Move freely and use public spaces, including public sidewalks, in public parks, on public transportation and in public buildings without harassment or intimidation from law enforcement officers, or others in the same manner as other persons.**
- 2. Equal opportunities for employment, and has the right not to face discrimination while seeking or maintaining employment due to his or her lack of permanent being that of a shelter or a social service provider.**
- 3. Receive emergency medical care, free from discrimination based on his or her housing status.**
- 4. Register to vote and receive necessary documentation to prove identity for voting without discrimination due to his or her housing status. The Secretary of State shall provide voter registration identification cards, free of charge.**
- 5. Protection from disclosure of his or her records and information provided to homeless shelters and service providers to state, municipal, and private entities without appropriate legal authority and the right to confidentiality of personal records and information in accordance with all limitations on disclosure established by the Federal Homeless Management Information System, Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and the Federal Violence Against Women Act.**
- 6. Reasonable expectation of privacy with his or her personal property; to the same extent as personal property in a permanent residence.**
- 7. Receive equal treatment by state and municipal agencies without discrimination based on housing status.**

Written Testimony of Sloane Sandler, Homeless Ally
Before the Public Health Committee
March 15, 2012

In Support of SB 896, AN ACT CONCERNING A HOMELESS PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS

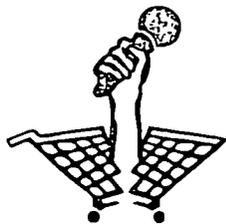
Hello Chairpersons Gerratana and Johnson and member of the Public Health committee. I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Sloane Sandler and I am a Homeless Ally affiliated with Hands on Hartford and the UCONN School of Social Work. I am also a proud resident of the City of Hartford. I am here in support of the Senate Bill 896-AN ACT CONCERNING A HOMELESS PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS.

The homeless are arguably one of the most disenfranchised populations in the world. Individuals living on the street or in shelters are often without the essential basic needs such as adequate medical care, a healthy and balanced diet, safety from violent attack and abuse, or the right to fair and affordable housing. Without a place to call home, individuals are left with very few viable options. Many are able to stay at an emergency shelter, but there they encounter eligibility requirements, strict rules, unfair treatment and time limitations. Those that are not able to find temporary housing are forced outdoors, many times under bridges, in parks and in the woods or in desolate areas. The homeless are ostracized, alienated, and ignored. Due to media's negative portrayal of people living in homelessness, the public's perception of homeless individuals has caused continuous harsh treatment and a general lack of support. The homeless are forced to learn how to survive without adequate support from their communities, living hand to mouth with minimum resources.

We have not given enough attention or support to the growing number of individuals that live every day without their basic human needs. In fact, we as a community have proven to do more harm than good, choosing to exile and punish victims of homelessness rather than empower and assist.

I ask you to please protect the rights of close to 4,500 homeless individuals in Connecticut. I ask you to additionally amend Connecticut's fair housing law to including housing status as a protected category. In order to create sustainable progress among the homeless population, it is vital that we consider empowerment as a tool for progress. Please help my most at risk neighbors.

Thank you.



FACES OF HOMELESSNESS

Written Testimony of Nate Fox, Program Coordinator & Homeless Ally
 Before the Public Health Committee
 March 15, 2013

In Support of SB 896, AAC A Homeless Persons' Bill of Rights

Senator Gerrata, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Homeless Human Rights Campaign and thank you for supporting the principle that all people, whether housed or unhoused, deserve equal treatment, dignity and respect under the law.

My name is Nate Fox and I'm Project Supervisor for the Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau and co-coordinator of the CT Homeless Human Rights Campaign. Through these projects, I work with people facing homelessness to dismantle the myths and stereotypes of homelessness by educating the public on the realities of what it means to be homeless. As a man of relative privilege, I'm fortunate to say that I've never had to face the pain of experiencing homelessness nor the systematic discrimination that comes with it, but as a homeless ally I have spent a considerable amount of time over the past 3+ years working in shelters and with the homeless community, helping to found Beat of the Street – a street newspaper – and other social justice projects. During this time I have heard numerous accounts of the mistreatment and discrimination that people experiencing homelessness face. In fact, it's the most common thing I've heard.

What I am advocating for today is a social turn in how we approach and address homelessness. It's true that supportive and affordable housing are crucial solutions to homelessness, but from my on the streets experience, I would argue that we need to address the social issues involved in homelessness just as much as the technical, policy-based issues. Society looks down upon and criminalizes people experiencing homelessness and living in poverty. And while building supportive housing has resulted in many people exiting from technical homelessness, the fact is that many still feel stigmatized – for you see, they aren't viewed as humans, but instead they are "formerly homeless." It's like a scarlet letter – once you wear it, it's almost impossible to remove.

A Homeless Bill of Rights changes this dynamic by reaffirming the human rights of our homeless brothers and sisters, but it also can go a step further. When Rhode Island became the first state to pass a Homeless Bill of Rights in the nation, they did this by amending their Fair Housing Laws to include "housing status" as a protected social category and added the Homeless Bill of Rights as an additional section to their Fair Housing Laws. By doing this, they were able to include the phrase, "protect people from discrimination based on housing status" throughout the bill language. The group I am working with is extremely grateful for the Public Health Committee raising and supporting a Connecticut Homeless Bill of Rights modeled after the Rhode Island bill, and we hope the Committee can support a substitute bill that includes the legal phrasing "housing status" and "protect people from discrimination based on housing status." We understand this may necessitate that the bill be referred to the Housing Committee, something we are prepared for.

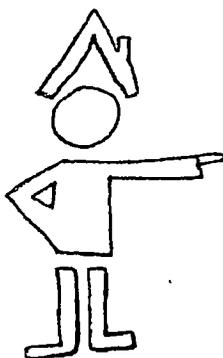
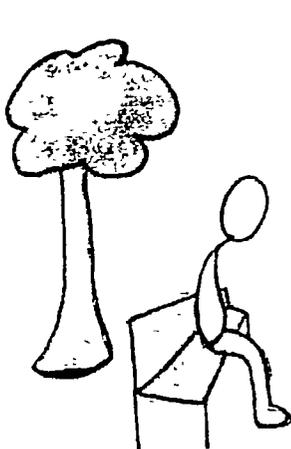
Truly solving the problems of discrimination and mistreatment will only happen when we finally end homelessness in this state and country. I look forward to that day when we will no longer need a Homeless Bill of Rights, but until then we can take a step towards protecting all residents of Connecticut by eliminating the discrimination, bias, and mistreatment facing our homeless neighbors by legally protecting our citizens from discrimination based on their housing status.

Thank you.

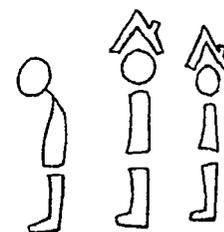
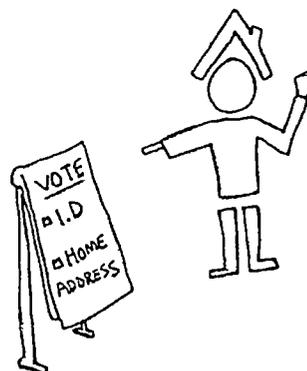
Please Support Bill S.B. 896

An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights

being **perceived** as **homeless**

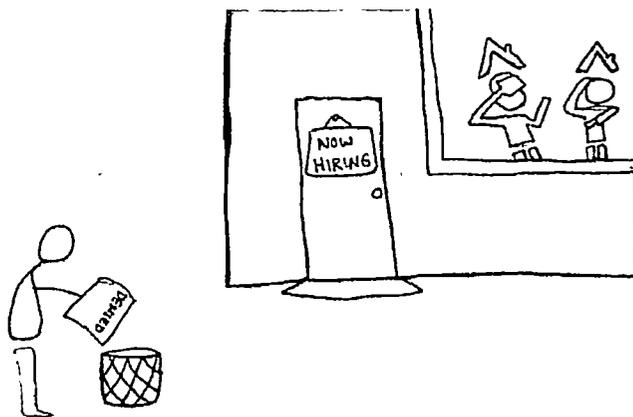


creates **limitations** and **barriers**



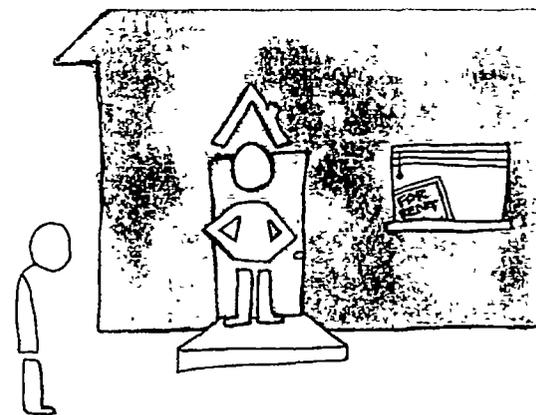
to **access** the things we all

need and **deserve**



solely

because of **housing status**



Please Help Protect and Ensure these Rights for Everyone

Please Support Bill S.B. 896



Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and other honorable members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Amanda Girardin; I am the Project Manager with Journey Home, the organization charged with leading the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness for the Greater Hartford Region. I am here today in support of the philosophy behind S.B. 896, An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights.

Through my job I work with people who are experiencing homelessness, have been homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless and the direct service providers who assist them. Almost every night, most, if not every single one of the 430 permanent shelter beds in the Greater Hartford region are full, and every morning most of the individuals, except families and the disabled, who fill those beds must leave the shelters. Imagine having nowhere to go between the hours of 8am and 5pm. Where would you go? What would you do with your belongings? How would you use the bathroom? For many of those experiencing homelessness, public space becomes a poor substitute for the private space they do not have. Laws that prohibit certain activities in public spaces therefore often end up disproportionately affecting the homeless simply because they utilize public space at higher rates and also because stereotypes that often come with the experience of homelessness result in selective enforcement of these laws.

In my work I have heard many stories from those who have experienced homelessness which suggest discrimination based on their homeless status. Individuals who have been asked to leave public park benches, where they were peacefully sitting during the middle of the day, because it was assumed they were up to no good. A gentleman who was informed they would not treat him for cancer because he didn't have a "permanent" place to recuperate. Another gentleman who was fighting to have his address changed at the post office because he had changed emergency shelters.

By criminalizing the homeless and denying them access to the rights that others freely have, not only do we do ourselves and those experiencing homelessness a moral injustice, but we harm our whole communities in tangible ways as well. Arrests and jail are very costly public "resources," and time spent behind bars is more expensive than time spent in emergency shelters. Letting a person's health issues worsen, instead of offering life saving care will result in more costly medical services later on. When we deny people services, job opportunities, or entitlements because of a lack of a permanent address, we only prolong the length of time they will remain homeless instead of allowing them to reach their potential as productive members of society.

I applaud the committee's, especially Senator Gerretana's, recognition of the injustice that occurs when someone is discriminated against simply because of their lack of a permanent residence. I urge the committee to pass SB. 896 and refer it to the Housing Committee to be attached to Connecticut's Fair Housing laws in such a manner that will allow for punitive action against those who violate the equal rights of or discriminate against those experiencing homelessness. Just as we have fought and succeeded in passing legislation to protect the rights of people on the basis of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, so too should we protect the rights of those who find themselves without a home.



Journey Home, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that works collaboratively to implement the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in the Greater Hartford region by initiating best practices and innovative, sustainable solutions to prevent and end homelessness.

The towns covered by this Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness are:

Andover	Manchester
Avon	Marlborough
Bloomfield	Newington
Bolton	Rocky Hill
Canton	Simsbury
East Granby	Somers
East Hartford	South Windsor
East Windsor	Stafford
Ellington	Suffield
Enfield	Tolland
Farmington	Vernon
Glastonbury	West Hartford
Granby	Wethersfield
Hartford	Windsor
Hebron	Windsor Locks

For more information on the current and developing initiatives of Journey Home and its partner organizations please visit: www.JourneyHomeCT.org

SB 896

Good Day Public Health Committee Members!

Attached to this email is electronic testimony on behalf of the Institute of Violence Prevention & Reduction at the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work. This document supports the protection of citizens facing homelessness.

Thank you.

--

Jacki Alessio

Intern with the Institute of Violence Prevention and Reduction, UConn

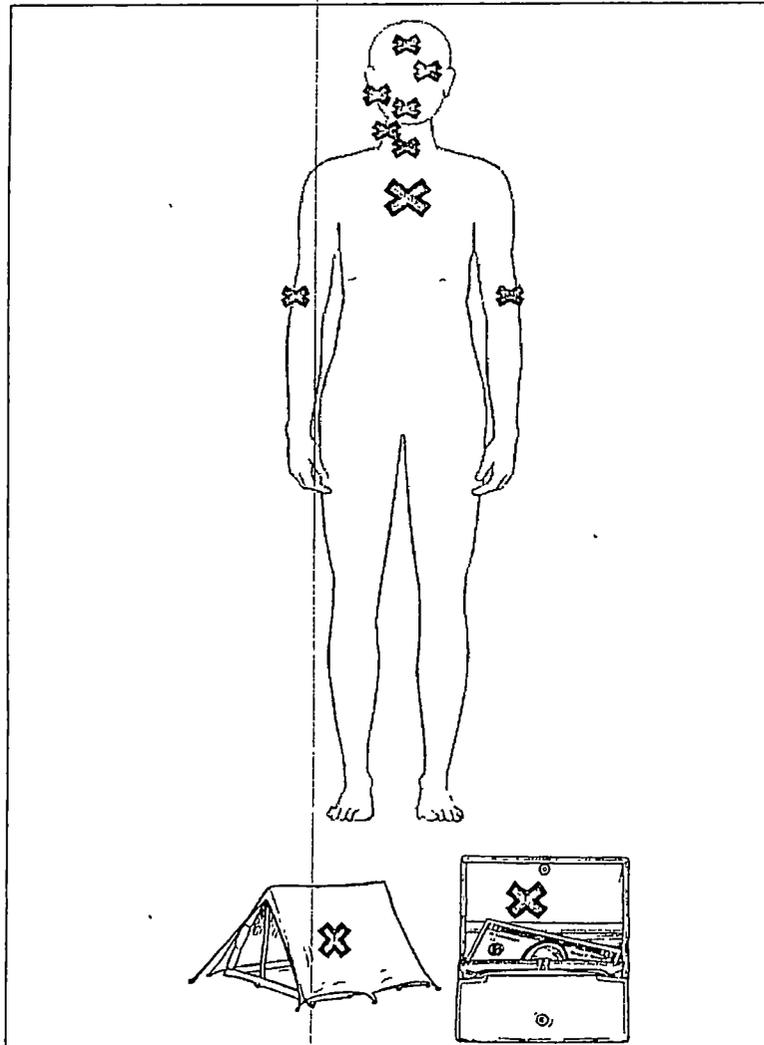
Co-Chair of the Administration Concentration

1st Year, MSW, UConn School of Social Work

(c) 203-232-4064

(school) Jaclyn.Alessio@uconn.edu

Support of HB 6572 & SB 896: Violence Against the Homeless



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA—March 11, 2011

John Rutledge, a tile-worker who had been laid off the previous year, was on his way to a homeless shelter when he was assaulted by four men. He sustained multiple injuries during the attack, including a fractured jaw and severe lacerations to his lips and mouth. The perpetrators also stole \$60 from him.

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA—March 30, 2011

On March 30th, Tommy Leadbetter, 46, held a 26-year-old homeless woman captive in his house for many hours. During this time, he beat and tortured her. The police found the young woman walking through a neighborhood with lacerations and bruising on her head, chest, and arms. She was then treated at a local hospital. Ledbetter was arrested about a week later and was charged with torture, assault, and robbery.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—April 22

Four young people severely beat a homeless man, 50, after attempting to rob him. The man was pistol-whipped and stabbed in the cheek by two of the men, one of whom was between the ages of 25 to 30. Then, another man and a woman set his tent on fire.

DAVENPORT, IOWA—July 31, 2011

Melvin Gott, 57, was sleeping on a park bench when he was attacked by Frankie L. Sird, 27. Sird put a knife to Gott's throat and demanded money. When Gott tried to pull the knife away, he was punched by another assailant who had approached from behind. Sird proceeded to kick Gott in the face with steel-toed boots. The attackers ran off when an ambulance arrived in response to a witness's 911 call. The victim needed stitches for the slashes on his neck, and the beating left him blind in one eye.

Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 896,
"An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights"

The Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek
President, Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice
Minister, Unitarian Universalist Society: East, Manchester, CT
March 15, 2013

Distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester, and President of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 896, "An Act Concerning a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights."

I urge you to vote to establish a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights in Connecticut. While all Connecticut residents' basic rights are already guaranteed by the Connecticut and United States Constitutions, it is clear to me from my relationships with people experiencing homelessness in Manchester and Hartford that such guarantees are at best tenuous, and at times non-existent. Despite Constitutional guarantees, it remains far too easy for public and private institutions, their staff, and other representatives to both advertantly and inadvertantly ignore or deny the rights of people experiencing homelessness. Fifteen years into my ministry I've heard countless stories of homeless people encountering barriers to voting and registering to vote, receiving emergency medical care, obtaining employment, using public spaces, protecting personal property and information and, not surprisingly, gaining access to affordable housing.

Here's the bottom line: Homeless people experience widespread discrimination in public life and seem to have little recourse to address that discrimination, especially in the moment it is happening. Establishing a Homeless Person's Bill of Rights in our state is a powerful first step to changing this *status quo*.

In addition to my support for Raised Bill No. 896, I urge you to consider the suggested revisions presented by a new coalition called the Connecticut Homeless Human Rights Campaign. In my view, these recommendations are offered in a good faith effort to strengthen the bill, in essence to assert beyond the shadow of a doubt that people experiencing homelessness deserve full access to the rights afforded to all citizens. I have attached those suggested revisions to my written testimony which was submitted electronically on March 13th.

Thank You.

**SUGGESTED REVISIONS TO
RAISED BILL NO. 896
AN ACT CONCERNING A HOMELESS PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS
From the Connecticut Homeless Human Rights Campaign**

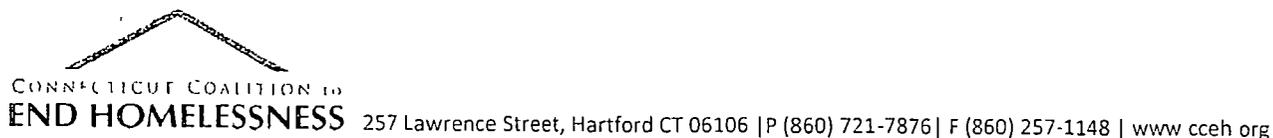
Suggested Revised Language for Section 1(a):

At the present time, many Connecticut residents continue to face the specter of homelessness due to the severe shortage of affordable housing, the impacts of economic hardship and economic downturn in our state, and a shrinking social safety net. Article 1, Section 1 of the Connecticut State Constitution states in part, that "All people when they form a social compact, are equal in rights." In line with this essential statement of the common law, it is reaffirmed that no person should have these rights compromised, face unequal treatment, or suffer unnecessarily due to discrimination based on his or her housing status. This section intends to address and prevent the continuation of these negative impacts to Connecticut residents who lack a permanent home.

(b) each homeless person in the state has the right to:

Suggested Revised Language for Section 1 (1) to (7).

- (1) Move freely and use public spaces including, but not limited to, public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person, and without harassment or intimidation from law enforcement officers;
- (2) Equal opportunities for employment, and the right not to face discrimination while seeking or maintaining employment due to his or her lack of permanent mailing address, or his or her mailing address being that of a shelter or a social service provider;
- (3) Receive emergency medical care, free from discrimination based on his or her housing status;
- (4) Vote, register to vote and receive necessary documentation to prove identity for voting without discrimination due to his or her housing status. The Secretary of State shall provide voter registration identification cards, free of charge;
- (5) Have protection from disclosure of his or her records and information provided to homeless shelters and service providers to state, municipal, and private entities without appropriate legal authority; and the right to confidentiality of personal records and information in accordance with all limitations on disclosure established by the Federal Homeless Management Information System, Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and the Federal Violence Against Women Act;
- (6) A reasonable expectation of privacy with his or her personal property to the same extent as personal property in a permanent residence;
- (7) Receive equal treatment by state and municipal agencies without discrimination based on housing status.



Written Testimony of Lisa P. Sementilli, Deputy Director

Before the Public Health Committee

March 15, 2013

In Support of: SB 896 A Homeless Person's Bill of Rights

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), and thank you for your consideration of matters of importance to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Connecticut's emergency shelters have run at or over 100% of their legal capacity for more than two years. More than 16,000 persons (and this includes children) used our emergency and transitional housing programs last year. Our data show that far more families and individuals experience housing instability and homelessness at any one time than can be served by our fragile prevention and crisis response system -- *an estimated 40,000 families are "doubled up" (staying with family or friend for economic reasons) in Connecticut.*

CCEH supports SB 896 and believes all people experiencing homelessness should be treated with dignity and respect. Equal opportunity for all under the law is a central tenet of our democracy. Access to public resources and connection to community is a critical piece of getting out of homelessness and trauma is too common an experience for those without a safe place to call home. Public parks, transportation and buildings belong to all of us and should be free from harassment or intimidation from law enforcement officers for all our citizens.

SB 896 also supports the rights of homeless persons to have equal opportunity in employment. Economic opportunity in Connecticut continues to be limited, especially for those with barriers such as disabling health conditions, unstable housing, limited education, or a history of trauma or violence that many homeless persons experience. We urge your support for expansions of job training and education programs to advance employment and earnings for the most marginalized residents.

CCEH espouses a "housing first" philosophy and approach to ending homelessness. This means that housing should not be used as a reward for compliance with treatment plans, employment success or "good" aka docile behavior or sobriety. Instead, stable housing is the pathway to a more stable life, better employment and earnings, better compliance with behavioral health treatment, participation in income support programs.

We urge you to not only focus on a bill of rights, but on housing-based solutions to end homelessness. While economic security for all our residents remains elusive, the good news is that we have the tools to end homelessness, and urge you to support several of the provisions in the Governor's budget.

In particular, we urge your support for **rapid re-housing**. Governor Malloy's proposal includes an on-going commitment to rapid re-housing. It adds \$500,000 (\$250,000 each year) for housing relocation and stabilization services and short-term financial assistance to help homeless families move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability. CCEH views the rapid re-housing investment as a down payment on ending family homelessness in Connecticut. Rapid Re-Housing is a set of interconnected strategies:

1. Coordinated intake, screening and housing-based assessment
2. Housing search, landlord recruitment, and relocation assistance.
3. Housing stabilization supports, linkages to community services
4. Timed limited financial assistance (for up to 12 months). This may include transportation for housing search, first/last month's rent, security deposit, application fees, moving costs, utility connection fees and arrearages, and other costs depending on the needs of the family. Rental assistance structured as a shallow flat subsidy based on unit size and adjusted for each region.

Last biennium, Governor Malloy initiated a significant investment in affordable housing in Connecticut included \$120 million for affordable housing; \$30 million to preserve and upgrade public housing as the start of a ten year commitment; and over \$30 million for 300 units of supportive housing. The biennial budget also provides:

- **Supportive Housing.** The proposed budget also adds \$20 million in funding for 100 units of supportive housing, with an annualized \$1 million for rental assistance subsidies and \$1 million for services. There are approximately 2,500 chronically homeless individuals in Connecticut.
- **Affordable Housing.** Authorizes \$68 million in capital funding in each year of the biennium to create new affordable housing options for workers, youth and families.
- **Public Housing Revitalization.** Authorizes \$60 million in bonding (\$30 million in each year). Funding is supported with an annualized \$3 million for 300 new rental assistance vouchers.

We urge your support for civil rights measures as well as rapid, supportive and affordable housing. Thank you.